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Commission on the Status of Women
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2-13 March 1998
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men

Statement submitted by the World Federation of the Ukrainian Women's Organizations and World Movement of Mothers, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Trafficking in and enslavement of women

As organizations that have been involved for many years in the promotion of basic human rights for humankind and especially women and children, we are concerned with the recent increase in the trafficking in and enslavement of women throughout the world and, particularly at this time, the growing number from Eastern Europe. The United Nations estimates that there are 4 million people throughout the world who are victims of trafficking yearly. They are deceived and coerced into working against their will in different types of servitude. The International Organization for Migration reports that about 500,000 victims of trafficking enter Western Europe annually.

Young Asian women have been the basic commodity for decades. The newcomers to the slave market are young, naive Ukrainian, Russian and other Slavic women who, because of their economic hopelessness and lack of employment, are entrapped, enslaved,

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stripped of their basic human rights and forced to work in houses of prostitution in various parts of the world. This trade in human flesh has become so lucrative that international organized crime is taking full advantage of the easy money and the lack of laws and stiff punishment. Many of these women are imprisoned in overcrowded living conditions and are threatened and beaten and not fed if they protest or do not perform sex with the "clients". All traces of these women are lost; they disappear forever. They have no legal status in the countries to which they are forcibly sent and no recourse to law enforcement.

Governments seem to be indifferent to this growing trafficking in women and girls and are not implementing the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. The effective suppression of trafficking in women and girls for the sex trade should be a matter of pressing international concern.

Trafficking in women and girls is a debasement of the human spirit for both the victim and the perpetrators and collectively for the societies involved.

This modern day slavery cannot continue!

We as well as Zonta International, the National Council on Family Relations, the International Union of Family Organizations, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, the Women's International Democratic Federation, the International Health Awareness Network, the International Federation on Ageing, World Information Transfer, the International Alliance of Women, and the Global Alliance for Women's Health, supporting non-governmental organizations, appeal to all Governments to take definitive action to resolve this human tragedy.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the the critical areas of concern

Statement submitted by the Transnational Radical Party, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Women and armed conflict

The Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that foreign occupation, alien domination, and armed and other conflicts are some of the largest impediments to women's enjoyment of their fundamental human rights. Women living under such conditions are far more likely to be victims of arbitrary detention, rape, racial and other discrimination, religious persecution, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Women and children living under such conditions often become refugees and suffer the harsh consequences of displacement. The Platform for Action recognizes that the solutions to these problems lie in addressing their root causes.

Tibet is a case in point. The conflict between the Tibetan people and the Chinese Government is in its forty-ninth year. During this period of time and to this date, Tibetans have been subjected to egregious human rights violations. Women, and particularly nuns, have suffered gravely from torture, including gender-specific torture of their genitals and breasts, arbitrary detention, religious persecution and, in the past 10 years, from forced and coerced abortions and sterilizations.

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This statement will address the crucial importance of addressing the underlying causes of human rights violations in situations of foreign occupation and armed and other conflict, the need for peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms and for international intervention in such situations.

Human rights violations in Tibet were the subject of General Assembly resolutions in 1959, 1961 and 1965. The Assembly called on China to respect the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people, including their human right to self-determination. Similar concern was expressed by the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of the Commission on Human Rights in its 1991 resolution on China and Tibet.

Recent reports by reliable and highly regarded human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists, Tibet Information Network and Physicians for Human Rights, all point to a continued pattern of grave human rights violations. The International Commission of Jurists, in its December 1997 report on Tibet, found that between one quarter and one third of the over 600 known political prisoners in Tibet were nuns. Stating that torture in detention was widespread in Tibet, the report found that women, particularly nuns, appeared to be subjected to some of the harshest torture, often gender-specific, including rape using electric cattle-prods and ill-treatment of breasts. Nuns were not only brutally tortured in Chinese detention, but some lost their lives, such as 24-year-old Gyaltsen Kelsang and 20-year-old Phuntsog Yangkyi, who died in 1995 and 1994, respectively, as a result of prison torture and other ill treatment.

Even though Tibetans have never had a population problem, lay women are subjected to mandatory birth quotas of from one to two children and to coerced abortions and sterilizations. For example, in the Chushur district 308 women were sterilized in only one month between September and October of 1996. One woman reportedly died and another fell seriously ill as a result. Children born without birth permits are denied official registration and access to food ration cards, schools and health care. With a population of fewer than 6 million people (less than the population of Los Angeles), living in a territory of roughly the size of Western Europe, Tibetans have a population density of 1.6 persons per square kilometre, one hundredth that of China.

The Beijing Platform for Action explicitly states that women have the right to make decisions, free from discrimination and coercion, regarding the number and spacing of their children. China's imposition of duress, coercion and fines on women who do not voluntarily comply with its population control policies violates Tibetan women's reproductive rights as recognized under international law. These reproductive rights violations are particularly abhorrent since they are committed by one ethnic group against another. In this context it is also important to note that an estimated 1.2 million Tibetans lost their lives in the conflict between Tibetans and the Chinese Government and that the Chinese Government has already reduced Tibetans to a minority in Tibet by transferring an estimated 7 million Chinese settlers into Tibet.

While China prides itself on improving the education and economic lives of Tibetans, recent reports on the state of education and health care are most disturbing. A 1996 study (based on a limited sample) found that an estimated 30 per cent of all school-aged Tibetan children received no education at all (compared to 1.5 per cent of Chinese children). Tibet has a 64 per cent enrolment rate for primary-school-aged children, compared to 98.5 per cent for China. While China claims that the major impediment to the education of Tibetan children is the remoteness of some Tibetan regions, Tibetans report high school fees as the major obstacle. Only 17 per cent of the children who received primary-school education in Tibet did not have to pay school fees. Tibetan children reported having to pay school fees ranging from 20 to 6,000 yuan. Many reported having to pay bribes to their teachers.

Interviews of refugee children revealed that 53 per cent of the children in the study were taught exclusively in the Chinese language in primary schools in Tibet. In middle schools, that number increased to 83 per cent. The children interviewed reported that they were not provided any education in Tibetan cultural heritage, that they were not allowed to wear Tibetan clothes and were not allowed to honour Tibetan holidays in school. Many reported being coerced into spying on their parents. A 13-year-old girl reported, "They promised us 200 yuan if we found any evidence that proved that our parents talked about subjects relating to Tibetan culture, history or religion."

Health care is woefully inadequate in Tibet. While health care is supposed to be free in Tibet, in practice, access to hospitals and doctors is restricted by unaffordable fees. Most clinics lack basic medications and other supplies and operate under unhygienic conditions. As a result, Tibetan children are dying at excessive rates of diseases such as tuberculosis, pneumonia and diarrhoea, which are preventable and which are the traditional killers of indigenous peoples in occupied countries.

Recent studies have also shown that, while the height of children in China has been increasing in recent decades, the height of Tibetan children is declining significantly. This is most likely the result of chronic malnutrition, beginning with the malnutrition of pregnant women.

Poverty and illiteracy are also most likely the cause of a rapid rise in prostitution in Tibetan cities such as Lhasa. According to an appeal for help sent out from Tibet in December of 1996, young girls are brought from the countryside to work in brothels in Lhasa.

These systematic human rights violations have led to a consistent pattern of flight. Over 150,000 Tibetans have fled into exile. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees places the number of escapees over the past several years at 3,000 per year. Others estimate that more than 5,000 undertake the treacherous flight over the Himalayas each year. Many, especially women and children, perish on their desperate journey out of Tibet. In January of 1997, for example, a 21-year-old nun, Tashi Choeden from Shugsep nunnery, an 8-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy froze to death on the Shargung La Pass on their escape from Tibet. They were part of a group of 27 Tibetans from Lhasa. One of the survivors narrowly escaped rape upon reaching Nepal. Many of the children who flee are unaccompanied, sent by their parents with the hope that the children will be able to secure an education in Tibetan, ironically, outside of Tibet.

The International Commission of Jurists noted that repression in Tibet has increased steadily since 1994, with further escalation since 1996. This increase in human rights violations can be directly traced to the Chinese Communist Party's 1994 Third National Forum on Work in Tibet which identified the Dalai Lama and "Dalai clique" as the root of Tibet's instability. Chinese officials declared that, "to kill a serpent we must first chop off its head". High-level approval was reportedly given for a stepped-up "strike hard" campaign for suppression of dissident political opinion.

Situations of foreign occupation and armed and other conflict are characterized by unequal power relationships. A direct link between political conflict and stepped-up suppression of fundamental human rights and freedoms of those suspected of espousing prohibited views is unfortunately all too common in such situations. The Beijing Platform for Action therefore emphasizes the promotion of non-violent conflict resolution. The Platform particularly endorses reaffirmation of the right of self-determination of all peoples. It encourages Governments and international and regional organizations to engage in

diplomacy, negotiations and peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

As the case of Tibet demonstrates, long-standing conflicts and the resulting human rights violations do not disappear in the absence of determined international action. While these conflicts often escalate into further violence, such as international terrorism, the Tibetan people, under the leadership of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, following the initial military conflict, have engaged in a campaign of non-violent action to further their aspirations for fundamental freedoms and human rights. If such a non-violent campaign does not engender tangible international support and a resulting peaceful resolution, the world community will send a clear message to peoples all over the world that only violence will focus world attention on existing conflicts.

Therefore, it is recommended that the following steps be taken in situations of foreign occupation, alien domination and armed and other conflict:

(a) Governments: Actively encourage Governments involved in foreign occupation and armed and other conflicts to enter into negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the conflict; actively encourage such Governments to open the conflict territory and its institutions, without undue restrictions, to state and non-governmental missions as well as to the international media;

(b) General Assembly: Debate any contested issues of self-determination;

(c) United Nations Secretary-General: Using his good offices, appoint a special envoy to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict and, in cases such as that of Tibet, to promote a United Nations-supervised referendum to ascertain the wishes of the people seeking self-determination;

(d) International, regional and non-governmental organizations: Provide relevant expert information to and lobby Governments, the Secretary-General and the General Assembly to take the actions set forth above.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Statement submitted by the World Veterans Federation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

The World Veterans Federation (WVF) is pleased to bring to the attention of the Commission several resolutions passed by its twenty-second General Assembly (10-15 November 1997) in Seoul, Republic of Korea, which address the focal points of the current session: human rights, violence against women, women in armed conflict, and the girl child.

WVF, founded in 1950 by war veterans and war victims, today has over 27 million members located in 74 countries on every continent. Recognizing that war and armed conflicts can affect women differently than men, in 1984 WVF created a Standing Committee on Women to focus on the situation of women in armed conflicts. It provided considerable input to the drafting of the Beijing Platform of Action on relevant critical areas of concern.

Unhappily, the numbers of women and children affected by armed conflicts is increasing. In the past decades, the casualties among civilians from local ethnic conflicts and civil wars outnumber those of the combatants. The civilian casualties are mostly women

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and children. They include war disabled, mine victims, refugees and internally displaced widows and orphans, unaccompanied children, wives of disabled, internees of concentration and labour camps, raped and sexually exploited women. This development prompted WVF at its Sixth International Conference on Legislation (Lisbon, March 1994) to amend its *Guidelines to Basic Rights for War Veterans and Victims of War*, to respond to the needs of the steadily increasing numbers of the resulting civilian victims of war, especially women and children.

We especially call your attention to resolution 28 (see annex) which identifies the tragic situation of the "comfort women" of World War II, who over 50 years after the end of that war have not received reparations or justice. During the 1930s and 1940s, as Japan engaged in massive armed aggression against nations throughout Asia, hundreds of thousands of women and young girls living in those countries were raped, abused and forced into sexual slavery for years at government-organized "comfort stations". Many of these women died from the harsh treatment; those who survived were physically and emotionally scarred, their expectations for a normal future ruined forever. These crimes against women and girls committed by the Japanese Government were never admitted to by that Government or prosecuted as war crimes after World War II ended.

It was not until 1992, when one of the "comfort women" finally spoke up and revealed her horrible experience that the veil of silence about this atrocity was lifted and the world became aware of the nature and extent of the crimes against women and girls in Asia during the Japanese rampage. Since then, more women have talked about their ordeals and have sought justice. Many human rights groups around the world, including those in Japan, have taken up the cause of the "comfort women", but as yet, that Government has not provided state reparations or apologies to the women concerned.

In 1992, Etsuro Totsuka, a Japanese attorney-at-law, brought the issue of "comfort women" to the attention of the Commission on Human Rights. The Commission's Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, was directed to study the issue. Her 1996 report condemned the Japanese conduct as military sexual slavery which represented a crime against humanity. The report concluded that the Government of Japan had both a legal and moral obligation towards the women kept in military sexual slavery during World War II.

A document put out in June 1995 by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, *Supplementary explanations of the recommendations on the issue of "comfort women"* forthrightly stated: "... it is absolutely necessary to make reparations immediately, including the payment of monetary compensation to the many so-called comfort women who are extreme examples of violence perpetrated against women. We believe that the resolution of this issue is necessary to eradicate violence against women."

As the Commission deals with the focal points at its forty-second session, we hope that the issue of the "comfort women", who are innocent casualties of war and numbered at least 200,000 throughout Asia, will receive the attention it deserves. Since many are dying or already dead, it is cru al that this violence against young girls and women, which occurred over five decades ago, be recognized by the international community and that the nation involved be pressured finally to make reparations, appropriate apologies and include this sorry story in the history of that period as it educated its children.

Besides the pressure of time to render justice to the now aged women, often in the most dire circumstances, we believe the issue of the "comfort women" has particular relevant to the Commission at this session because it intersects with all four of the focal points under consideration. A large proportion of the women forced into sexual slavery were adolescent

girls, some as young as 13. The sexual and other abuse they suffered, the status of slavery they endured, represented extraordinary violence against their persons. These experiences perpetrated by regular members of armed forces in a time of armed conflict violated the human rights of these girls and women.

Although rape and sexual abuse have often been associated with war, they have usually been random and not officially sanctioned. This instance of the "comfort women" during World War II is especially horrendous because the Japanese Government, through its highest military command, institutionalized the practices of rape and sexual slavery. We urge the Commission at this session to consider this issue in all its dimensions.

Annex

Resolutions adopted by the World Veterans Federation at its twenty-second General Assembly

Resolution 25. Victims of war and human rights

The 22nd General Assembly,

1. Noting that under the leadership of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which held an International Conference for the Protection of War Victims in 1993, the international community has concluded that more civilians, mostly women and children, are casualties of current armed conflicts than combatants;

2. Recognizing that the WVF has addressed the difficult circumstances and problems of this large population numbering in millions by including them in its revised *Guidelines to Basic Rights for War Veterans and Victims of War* and in numerous resolutions, including resolution 2, "Assistance to new victims of war", of the 21st General Assembly (Bordeaux, 1994);

3. Considering that 1998 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which the basic human rights of women were affirmed;

4. Considering also that the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), in which the WVF participated and also sent good wishes (resolution 13 of the 21st General Assembly held in Bordeaux, 1994), reaffirmed the human rights of women throughout its Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration: "We affirm our commitment to: ... Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms";

5. Calling attention to the fact that the WVF Standing Committee on Women, since it was formed in 1983, has been actively making the case to the United Nations and the rest of the international community that this large population of women and children, civilian victims of war and war victims, has not received adequate attention and assistance;

6. Observes with satisfaction that the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women has designated "women in armed conflicts" as one of its twelve critical areas of concern; and furthermore, that "women in armed conflict" will be one of the four themes to be focused on at the 1998 meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women;

7. Extends good wishes to the Commission in its study of this large group of victims of war and urges the WVF Standing Committee on Women to participate actively in the 1998 session and other relevant United Nations meetings;

8. Furthermore, supports the Optional Protocol to the important human rights instrument, the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women, which will be reviewed at the 1998 session of the Commission, which would allow individuals and groups the right of petition, thereby enhancing the protection of the human rights of women;

9. Urges the WVF next year through its Standing Committees and member associations to celebrate fully and appropriately the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as to commemorate all the other key international instruments that protect and enhance human rights for all persons.

Resolution 26. Children in armed conflicts

The 22nd General Assembly,

1. Noting that the United Nations report on the impact of armed conflict on children (the "Machel report", A/51/306) gives full details of the abuse and exploitation of millions of children during armed conflicts today and that they represent half of the new civilian victims of war, who suffer devastating, long-lasting, possible lifetime effects of those war experiences and;

2. Noting further that the report reveals the widespread forced recruitment of children under the age of 18, mostly boys but including some girls, into military service which often results in these children actually taking part in the fighting and sometimes in atrocities;

3. Noting also that the report calls for a "global campaign" to eradicate this practice and urges the international community to join in this effort,

4. Observing that the report clearly demonstrates that girl children are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and gender-based violence during armed conflicts or in flight from conflicts;

5. Observing further that the report makes specific recommendations as to how the international community should address these many instances of violence against girl children, including rehabilitative treatment and prosecution of rape as a war crime;

6. Noting also that the report covers the many threats that conflicts make to the survival, health and well-being of children — by land mines, as well as the terrible displacements that armed conflicts cause, creating millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, more than half of whom are children;

7. Observing that many nations have not yet singed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which does not permit most of the abuses described in the report;

8. Further noting that the report calls for revising the Convention through an optional protocol, to raise the minimum age for military service to 18;

9. Recalling recommendations 33, 34 and 35 from the WVF Sixth Legislation Conference in Lisbon in 1994 which addressed the protection and welfare of children during and after armed conflicts;

10. Urges the member associations to urge their Governments to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child and also to support the optional protocol which would change the minimum age for military service to 18;

11. Calls upon the Executive Board, the Standing Committees and the member associations to review the above-mentioned report and its recommendations to see how they can contribute to the protection of children during armed conflicts;

12. Further urges the Executive Board to explore how the WVF can join with other non-governmental organizations, within the framework of Untied Nations initiatives, in an international campaign to protect children from the dire consequences of armed conflicts and to mitigate the long-term negative results of their experiences during armed conflicts.

Resolution 27. "Comfort women" of World War II

The 21st General Assembly,

1. Referring to resolution 18, "Violence against women", which the WVF Council adopted in Taipei in 1993, and the WVF's abiding interest in lessening and eliminating the violence against women that occurs when war breaks out;

2. Noting with deep sympathy the sufferings of the thousands of Asian "comfort women" who were captured, incarcerated and forced into sexual slavery on an organized basis in occupied territories in Asia before and during World War II, and whose sufferings have been brought to public attention in recent years;

3. Considering that substantial evidence and testimony exists about the extent and nature of this sexual slavery and that its victims should be offered a full apology and receive appropriate reparations;

4. Noting with satisfaction that the United Nations has seriously begun to address this issue of violence against women, that the Secretary-General has appointed a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women for the Commission on Human Rights, and that the General Assembly has adopted a Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women;

5. Considering the comprehensive work of WVF's Standing Committee on Women, which has been addressing the issue of sexual violence against women during armed conflict, in part by organizing a special session on rape in armed conflicts at the meeting of the Standing Committee on European Affairs in Istanbul in 1993;

6. Recalling the moving presentation made by the Philippine delegate at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Women in Lisbon earlier this year regarding Philippine women's experiences as "comfort women";

7. Appeals to the Government concerned to respond fully to these allegations and to make appropriate reparations to the surviving "comfort women";

8. Further urges the Executive Board and the Standing Committee on Women to continue their work in this area;

9. Calls upon member associations to urge their Governments to support the efforts of the Philippine Government and other Governments to seek justice for World War II "comfort women" of Asia within and outside the United Nations,

Resolution 28. Human rights of women in wartime

The 22nd General Assembly,

1. Recalling resolution 27, adopted by the 21st General Assembly, regarding the "comfort women" of World War II;

2. Condemning all violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict;

3. Noting the steps taken by the authorities concerned in recognizing the crimes committed against those victims who were forcibly mobilized as military sexual slaves, especially in the Asian region, and the need for compensation for the victims;

4. Noting that the women in question are getting older and have serious medical and financial problems, and that, furthermore, many are dying;

5. Considering that the victims feel that they have still not regained their honour and dignity as human beings and that the measures taken until now do not meet all their expectations suitably;

6. Strongly urges the authorities involved to urgently pursue their action with a view to fully meeting these expectations;

7. Expresses the hope that in the near future all the countries in the world will have to participate and seek proper and effective responses through the United Nations and specialized agencies and the international non-governmental organizations concerned to eliminate the violation of the rights of women in war time, emphasizing the need for appropriate systems and special compensation for the victims;

8. Further urges the Executive Board, the Standing Committee on Women and the member associations to continue their efforts to seek justice for the "comfort women".

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Statement submitted by Friends World Committee for Consultation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

Girl soldiers

The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) (Quakers), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, would like to draw to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women the following points in relation to the Commission's focus on women in armed conflict and the girl child:

The Quakers United Nations Office, Geneva, the office representing FWCC at the United Nations in Geneva, led the research on child soldiers (defined as those under 18 years of age) for the United Nations report on the impact of armed conflict on children ("Machel report") which was presented to the General Assembly in 1996 (A/51/306). The findings of the Child Soldiers Research Project have been published by Radda Barnen (Stockholm, 1996) in *Children, the Invisible Soldiers*, by Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin.

The finding of particular relevance to the Commission on the Status of Women is that, in many situations, girls as well as boys become involved as active participants in today's

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wars. According to our information, up to a third of the child combatants are girls. This is in itself cause for concern, given the high incidence of death, injury, disease and other problems associated with being a child combatant.

A particular problem faced by many girl soldiers is that, in addition to participating in combat, they are expected or required to provide sexual services. In some cases, girls are in fact primarily recruited or abducted as "wives" or concubines. Such conduct, apart from being in itself a violation of the girls' rights, leads to a high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, the dangers of pregnancy and/or abortion and associated complications. These consequences, then, may create additional problems for the girls concerned as to their reintegration into civilian society.

The Child Soldiers Research Project highlighted the fact that the overwhelming majority of child soldiers in all current armed conflicts are drawn from the poorest, least educated and most marginalized sectors of society, with those particularly at risk being children separated from their families (for any reason) or with disrupted family backgrounds. Particular attention therefore needs to be given in the short term to keeping families together or reuniting them and to the vulnerability of refugee and displaced children and adolescents (even those with their families). In the longer term, the conclusions of the Project reinforce the need to ensure effective access to education and a reasonable standard of living for all. A particular problem which cannot be overemphasised is that the single major motive for children and adolescents to volunteer for armed opposition groups is their personal experience of ill treatment (torture, killing of family members, destruction of homes) by governmental armed forces and consequent feelings of vulnerability.

FWCC, therefore, urges the Commission on the Status of Women to:

1. Support international efforts to raise the international standards relating to military recruitment and participation in hostilities from 15 to 18 years by means of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

2. Call on all Governments and other authorities to demobilize any under-18-year-olds they currently have in their armed forces or armed groups and to refrain from recruiting under-18-year-olds in future;

3. Call on all States of the Organization of African Unity which are not yet parties to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to become parties to it, so that the Charter can enter into force;

4. Call on all Governments, humanitarian organizations and the United Nations to take preventive steps to reduce the likelihood of girls being recruited into armed forces or armed groups or abducted for sexual purposes.

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Statement submitted by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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The International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), an organization in general consultative status, has, since its inception in 1930, worked to empower women educationally, politically and economically in the societies in which they live. Now, operating in 108 countries worldwide, IFBPW has become increasingly aware of the specific problems of violence against women and the barriers they impose to women's enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Remembering that paragraph 125 (d) of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women sought to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women and to contribute to its elimination, IFBPW has undertaken a partnership project, with its affiliates, identifying key issues, making them known to Governments and agencies, seeking appropriate legislation and encouraging the provision of rehabilitation programmes and support projects.

Recognizing that studies have shown that one learns violence at a very early age, either by being a direct victim or by being exposed to its use, and that if violence is ignored or

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tolerated within the family and society as a whole, children will accept it as a way of life, appropriate authorities are urged to provide formal, specific educational measures for both boys and girls, to teach them that all forms of violence are unacceptable.

Mindful that women in situations of domestic violence are often forced, by family pressure, culturally entrenched attitudes or the lack of financial resources, to return to unsafe relationships, which tends to indicate that in society's eyes domestic violence is not to be taken as seriously as other violent crime, all sectors of society are encouraged vigorously to support campaigns addressing changes in attitude and seeking legal reform, making domestic violence a separate category of crime.

Aware that a woman will, on average, take 33 beatings before making a cry for help and many more beatings to convince her to leave the perpetrator, non-governmental organizations, including IFBPW, have helped set up crisis centres and refuges offering medical and psychological counselling for women and their children. Mindful that in no country do such centres exist in sufficient numbers to deal with the problems, as the Platform for Action had intended (para. 125 (a)), IFBPW stresses the need for national and local governments to consider the provision of adequate facilities and the possibility of attaching them to hospitals and underwriting them for long-term viability, instead of short-term uncertainty.

Concerned that sexual harassment, intimidation and discrimination in the workplace and in public places cause women mental anxiety and physical stress and undermine their self-esteem, and recognizing that they are under-reported for fear of reprisal or loss of job, Governments and employers are urged to recognize the impact that situation has on women's participation and performance within the labour market, to take measures to make it unlawful for any person to demand, request or require any sexual favour from another, and to provide adequate training and monitoring programmes.

Causing increasing alarm is the growth of the illegal business of international trafficking in women and children as commodities for sexual purposes, particularly sexual tourism. Such practices have a number of repercussions. Human dignity and social value are undermined. There is a disintegration of the family and appropriate family values. In many countries the widespread practices of prostitution and related activities disrupt the social fabric and facilitate the spread of AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. Governments are implored to step up their efforts to initiate and support educational and training programmes that will lead to alternative occupations and sources of financial independence for the victims.

Stressing that all forms of violence against women, including the violence of rape, with particular reference to teenage girls in both rural and suburban areas, have a marked effect on the health of women and girls, causing physical or mental damage or disablement and perhaps requiring emergency or long-term health care, IFBPW recommends that urgent consideration be given to the provision of specialist resources, with professionals trained to cope with the impact of emotional, psychological, sexual and physical violence.

In conclusion, IFBPW stresses that tackling the issue of gender violence is not an effort to divide the sexes but, rather, to unite them. Preventing gender violence will improve relationships and the lives of families. Eliminating violence from women's lives will give

them the freedom to participate fully in society, to be financially independent, to be empowered for development and to make a proper contribution to the economies of their countries. Finally, IFBPW believes that the single major factor on which the achievement of these goals rests is a campaign that wins full and total respect for all women everywhere.

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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Statement submitted by the International Council on Social Welfare, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and the International Federation of University Women, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) marked a turning point for girls. In the Platform for Action, chapter I, section L, on the girl child expresses public and global acknowledgement by Governments of widespread discrimination against girls from the earliest stages of life, through their childhood and into adulthood. Two working groups on girls, established in 1993 in New York under the NGO Committee for UNICEF and in Geneva under the Committee on the Status of Women and representing 110 international and national non-governmental organizations in more than 100 countries, collaborated with United Nations Member States from Africa and Asia in support of that separate section on girls. Since the Conference, they have continued their efforts to ensure that governmental commitments are not empty words.

To aid in the review of section L at the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women and to gain a better perspective on progress in the field since the Conference, the working groups on girls distributed a questionnaire to nearly 1,000

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non-governmental organizations worldwide. The resulting report, "Clearing a path for girls", is based on 246 responses, representing 86 countries.

The following recommendations, drawn from the surveys and based on section L, are directed to Governments, intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, and to the Commission.

1. Education: Governments should set specific, time-bound goals and take appropriate actions to reduce the drop-out rate of girls from school, using a holistic approach to causes and solutions. This includes preventive programmes for girls at risk of early marriage, unplanned pregnancy and motherhood and all forms of labour, including work in their own household which interferes with their education. It also includes raising to 50 per cent the number of trained female teachers, improving safety in and on the way to school, improving the quality and relevance of schooling, through, *inter alia*, gender-sensitivity of teachers, curricula and textbooks, and creating special programmes to keep in school girls who are already pregnant or mothers. Special efforts must be made to reach out-of-school girls, with an emphasis on those who are the hardest to reach, such as members of ethnic minorities, the poorest of the poor, working girls, and girls with disabilities.

2. Economic exploitation/child labour: Governments and non-governmental organizations need to raise their own and the public's awareness about the scope, nature and impact of harmful work for girls, including work based on unequal gender roles, within their own families, which interferes with a girl's development. Gender-specific data regarding work must be collected, analysed and disseminated nationwide. Policies and strategies to enable families to provide for their children must be strengthened so that daughters do not need to be kept or removed from school in order to work. Special efforts must be made to develop legal protection and other special protective measures for adolescent girls working in areas not covered by existing legislation.

3. Data collection: To protect the rights of girls as children, to assess need and progress and to make distinctions between girls and women where different interventions are appropriate, special efforts must be made to collect, analyse and disseminate age and gender-disaggregated data in all relevant areas, including violence, child labour and HIV/AIDS. These data must be made readable and readily accessible and available to the broadest spectrum of population.

4. Participation: Governments and non-governmental organizations should incorporate in all relevant programmes the active participation of girls, including full access to information appropriate to their age and degree of maturity. This includes participation in the collection of information, design and implementation of programmes that directly affect them. Governments and non-governmental organizations can work with experienced youth non-governmental organizations to ensure that girls' participation is neither tokenistic nor inappropriate, but most effective. Children have very clear ideas about their own situations and how to improve them. As citizens, they have the right to be heard. Experience has also shown repeatedly that the more target groups are involved in the design and development of programmes affecting them, the more effective and sustainable those programmes are. This is as true for young girls and adolescents as for any other group.

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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of Strategic Objectives and Action in the Critical Areas of Concern

Statement submitted by Rotary International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

For many women around the world, each day is a struggle simply to survive. They endure physically taxing jobs to feed their families, because basic education is a luxury they cannot afford. They are the victims of violence, frequently at the hands of someone they love. Many die or suffer from preventable diseases because they lack adequate health care.

In June 1998, Rotary International will present its highest honour, the Rotary Award for World Understanding, to Dr. Catherine Hamlin for her ground-breaking work in the treatment of vaginal fistula (abnormal openings between the bladder and/or the vagina and rectum). Hamlin, along with her late husband Dr. Reginald Hamlin, refined surgical procedures to relieve incontinence and pain caused by severe trauma during childbirth.

Initially the success rate for surgical treatment of vaginal fistula was low, but it has improved with Hamlin's continuing research to exceed 90 per cent. As a result, more than 15,000 women in developing countries have resumed active lives rather than become social outcasts as their condition deteriorates.

At the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia, co-founded in 1975 by Hamlin, patients receive educational and vocational training in addition to post-operative physical

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therapy. They are given new clothing, food and money before returning to their villages. Many women choose to stay on at the hospital to help treat others suffering from the devastating condition.

The Rotary Award for World Understanding, established in 1980, is bestowed annually on a non-Rotarian who exemplifies the Rotary ideal of "service above self", especially in the promotion of international understanding, good will and peace through humanitarian service. During the Rotary International Convention in Indiana, United States, from 14 to 17 June, Hamlin will receive the crystal flame award and a US$ 100,000 Rotary Foundation check to benefit the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. Past recipients of the Award include Nelson Mandela, former United States President Jimmy Carter, Pope John Paul II, and the Salvation Army.

Rotary's service to women

Rotary encourages Rotarians to develop projects that address the needs of women in their communities and provide women with access to education, economic and social development, and health care.

Rotary clubs and districts provide vocational training, prenatal care, revolving loan funds, basic health services, and aid for battered women, among other types of assistance. Most projects can be adapted to benefit women around the world.

Sustainable economic development

Uganda – A Rotary Village Corps, developed by two Rotary clubs, secured a US$ 300,000 Rotary Foundation grant to develop and launch the Sustainable Economic Empowerment and Development (SEED) Project in 1997. Seeking to improve health and community life in Rakai, the Corps created trust banks (of which most of the trustees are women) which operate an incremental microcredit loan programme. The SEED project will enable the women of Rakai to become increasingly self-sufficient and capable of solving community problems through business, water, sanitation, agricultural and environmental means.

Guatemala – In July 1997, Rotary clubs in Virginia (United States) and Guatemala teamed up with the Rotary Foundation to establish two village banks to lend money to women in the community of Chimaltenango starting small businesses.

Education and vocational training

England – Under an adult literacy programme, tutors for Rotary's Choppington Project help prepare housewives to enter the job market or return to work. Women receive valuable advice on all aspects of a job search, from filling out applications to learning how to navigate the interview process.

Pakistan – The Rotary Club of Lahore Central sponsors vocational training for young girls in their community. The Club secures employment and provides transportation and follow-up mentoring.

Philippines – The Intramuros Rotary Club sponsors a Rotary Village Corps project which provides training in sewing skills to housewives entering the workforce, to people who are unable to afford higher education, and to disabled people. With the assistance of the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center, the project now has 200 sewing machines and is continuously training both men and women.

Domestic issues

United States – The Rotary Club of Wicomico County, Maryland, developed and raised funds for a project to build a community "safe house" for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse.

The Bardstown Rotary Club in Kentucky, provided funding to the Spouse Abuse Center and established an awareness programme to raise community consciousness about the issue of domestic abuse.

Ireland – Rotary clubs in Cork provide an organized day-long excursion in the country as a regular respite for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse.

Health issues

India – Rotary districts from Germany and Nigeria collaborated to develop a family health and planning project which benefited more than 500,000 women and their families. With the assistance of a matching grant from the Rotary Foundation, modern medical equipment was installed in three area hospitals.

Brazil – Doctors involved in the Mamma Project in Rio Claro and throughout the outskirts of the city traveled by ambulance to raise awareness among women of breast cancer and breast cancer prevention. Women learned about medical exams and breast exams and received a reference card with diagrams and instructions on how to examine their own breasts at home. In addition, several public-service announcements were aired on radio and television to raise awareness of the importance of self-examinations. Over 30,300 women have benefited directly or indirectly from the project.

The Rotary Award for the Advancement of Women

To encourage clubs to focus on women's issues, the Rotary International Board established the Rotary Award for the Advancement of Women, an international recognition accompanied by a US$ 50,000 Rotary grant. The award is given to the Rotary club that creates the most outstanding long-term, sustainable project which advances the development and progress of women.

The 1996-1997 award was presented to the Brasilia-Oeste (Brazil) Rotary Club for its work in developing a programme providing economic, vocational and social support to needy mothers in the community of Santa Maria. The ongoing programme offers single and disabled mothers basic child-care classes, seminars and instructional videos on health-care issues and family planning, safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The project also helps the women become economically independent by providing computer and vocational training.

Nominees for the 1997-1998 award included a vocational fish preservation training programme for women of fishermen's families at Bikeli Village, Atauro Island, in East Timor; a health information campaign for women in Mexico; a family life resource centre in the Philippines; and a menopause clinic in Turkey.